

Fairfax Center Phase II Working Group

Meeting Minutes

March 8, 2016

Attendance

Working Group: Jackie Bradley, Sandria Lherisse, Vincent Picciano, Jeff Parnes, Jeff Saxe, Robbie Stark, Jim Katcham

Staff: Kim Rybold (DPZ), Ken Sorenson (DPZ), Laura Floyd (Supervisor Smith's office – Sully District), Philip Scrannage (Supervisor Smith's office – Sully District), Andy Galusha (FCPA)

Introduction

Jim Katcham called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m. The working group approved the February meeting minutes, with the Chair abstaining. Kim Rybold explained that staff would be presenting submissions related to areawide guidance and would be seeking the working group's input on any issues to consider in revising the Plan text. Additionally, the submissions related to implementation would be introduced, allowing for a more in-depth discussion at the next meeting.

Presentation: Submission AW3 (Heritage Resources)

Kim Rybold highlighted that the current text identifies the Inventory of Historic Sites, archaeological resources in the Difficult Run EQC, the pre-Civil War Manassas Gap Railroad right-of-way and the presence of historic family cemeteries. She stated that the proposed updates include reformatting this section for consistency with other parts of Comprehensive Plan, and incorporating information gathering from ongoing surveys of potential heritage resources in the area. The working group did not have any additional comments on this topic.

Presentation: Submission AW4 (Parks and Recreation)

Kim Rybold stated that the current text recommends a linear park along Monument Drive, identifies stream valley trails to be developed throughout the area, and recommends that protected Resource Protection Area (RPA) should be dedicated to the Park Authority. The Little Rocky Run trail is one example of this policy being implemented. The current Plan text also includes a Park classification system that identifies various types of parks, including neighborhood parks, community parks, district parks, and countywide parks.

The proposed update would revise the text to reflect the current needs and the Park Authority's updated classification system, evaluate trail systems, natural and cultural resources, and incorporate the Urban Parks Framework into mixed-use areas. Jeff Saxe noted that the Fair Lakes development was asked to contribute money toward Patriot Park which is outside of the study area. He suggested that the concept of contributions for parks similar to Patriot Park should be introduced into the Comprehensive Plan as a policy.

An audience member asked if any part of the study area is planned for outdoor performance venues. Kim Rybold explained that these uses are generally not explicitly defined in the Comprehensive Plan.

Andy Galusha, representing the Park Authority, noted that this kind of use is one that is supported within the Urban Parks Framework, which the county is looking to apply to more intense, mixed-use areas. Vincent Picciano noted that the front of the Government Center could host a permanent performance structure, or the ellipse could serve a similar function.

Audience member Elizabeth Baker's asked if the Urban Parks Framework is similar to requirements in Tysons, and if it refers to an actual dedication of land or monetary contributions. Andy Galusha responded that it provides flexibility for urban areas, both with dedications or contributions. Jeff Saxe asked about Elizabeth Baker's experience so far in Tysons. She replied that is difficult in Tysons for applicants to meet open space requirements.

An audience member asked what the evaluation of trails will mean. Andy Galusha responded that they will examine existing trails and provide recommendations on where additional linkages may be made.

Presentation: Submission AW5 – Environment

Kim Rybold presented the current text, highlighting recommendations such as the use of stormwater best management practices to preserve and restore EQCs, the protection of the Occoquan basin and Difficult Run through the use of low density and/or cluster development, and the mitigation of problem soils. The proposed updates include removing references regional stormwater management ponds and adding in references to watershed management plans affecting the area. The working group did not have any additional comments on this topic.

Presentation: Submission AW7 – Land Use

Kim Rybold outlined the current land use guidance for the Fairfax Center Area. She noted that major policies include encouraging mixed use in the suburban center while preserving existing stable neighborhoods along the periphery of the area, not expanding spot commercial uses along Lee Highway, utilizing buffering between uses, and incorporating planting guideline. She also noted that there is an extensive section on energy conservation in site planning and design, based on concepts utilized at the time the plan was originally written. She stated that possible updates may include reviewing energy conservation guidance, potentially moving components of it to the environment section, and ensuring that guidance relating to buffers and landscaping is still appropriate.

Vincent Picciano asked how a future Metro station would fit in with suburban-style landscaping and planting. This should be considered as this section is updated.

Presentation: Submission AW13 – Trails and Bicycle Facilities

Kim Rybold noted that this section presently includes references to planned facilities on the Trails Plan Map and the Countywide Bicycle Network Map. It also recommends a coordinated walkway network and encourages pedestrian circulation through parking lots and to transit stops. She stated that proposed updates would identify appropriate street crossing locations and features to enhance current recommendations and would consider a more comprehensive and compact pedestrian and bicycle circulation plan for the area. This could include conceptual guidance for the Core Focus Area.

An audience member asked if there would be bicycle accommodations at the future Metrorail station and access to the planned I-66 trail. Including this in the Plan would help developers know what county desires for bicycle facilities. The Plan text should identify these as being important corridors and connections. Kim Rybold explained that the bicycle master plan does identify the types of facilities appropriate for certain roads, but does not get into the detail of specific connections. Vincent Picciano stated that a connection between Fair Oaks Mall and Fairfax Corner is needed. Robbie Stark noted that getting across I-66 is difficult for both pedestrian and cyclists.

Presentation: Submission AW9 (Development Elements)

Kim Rybold explained that the development elements are unique to the Fairfax Center area. These elements are required above the baseline level of development and include 5 topic areas: transportation, the environment, public facilities, site planning, and design. To reach the overlay level of development, a certain percentage of applicable elements are required within development applications. She stated that this submission seeks to evaluate if these elements are still relevant, and if they should be updated or simplified. For instance, some elements may no longer be relevant for an area that has been built out. The development elements are the back bone of the Fairfax Center Area Plan implementation, but in some cases countywide policy guidance may reaffirm or supersede the existing elements. She noted that a certain percentage of applicable elements are required to get to the overlay level.

Jeff Saxe explained that from his point of view, the development elements may have served a purpose when there was no infrastructure in this area. In some cases during rezoning applications, the checklist has become almost an afterthought. Jeff Saxe asked if staff could, in consultation with Zoning Evaluation Division staff, review the individual elements and see which ones are covered by other county policies.

Robbie Stark noted that if this is the only area in county that has development elements, how is development guided in other areas? Kim Rybold noted that Policy Plan guidance, along with the residential development criteria within the Zoning Ordinance, address many of these elements. Jeff Parnes asked if these elements are redundant and perhaps are an artifact from a different era. Kim Rybold responded that staff does rely on checklist but also relies on other parts of the Plan. She reiterated that staff will provide some additional analysis for the next meeting's discussion.

Presentation: Submission AW11 (Use-Specific Performance Criteria)

Kim Rybold presented the criteria, explaining that it is a set of guidelines for site planning, architectural, and landscape design. It is based on land use categories, but does not have a category for mixed use. She stated the submission seeks to evaluate if these standards are still in line with current practices. Jeff Saxe stated that he cannot recall when the use-specific criteria have actually been used in zoning applications. Staff said they would do some research to see how the criteria have been used prior to the next meeting's discussion. Jeff Parnes noted that it may be useful to retain the criteria to give future readers insight into the evolution of the Plan.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 p.m.